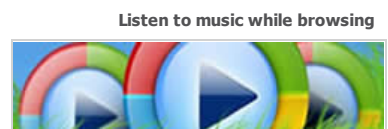




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Building an African vehicle

By MyJoyOnline

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The streets of Accra are choked with thousands of vehicles daily. All of them are imported- mainly from Asia, Europe and the United States. There are so many brands with Toyota, Honda, Hyundai, Mercedes, BMW...all foreign.

The absence of a reliable public transport system means many individuals must own cars for their daily travels. It's estimated that Ghana imports about one hundred thousand cars (100,000) annually. In 2013, a record 152,000 vehicles were imported into the country. Latest figures from the Customs Division of the

Ghana Revenue Authority suggest that between 2012 and 2014 over 385,000 vehicles were imported into the country

Importing that number of cars into the country comes at a huge cost to the Ghanaian economy. In 2012 alone the country spent about **2.25 billion** US Dollars to import vehicles and equipment into the country, according to UN World Data. This represents nearly 15 percent of Ghana's total imports for that year. Of this amount, 862 million Dollars was spent on vehicles alone, with the remaining spent on trucks and heavy duty vehicles and parts.

Now one project is attempting to reduce the heavy reliance on imported cars. The project wants Ghanaians to look within, not without, for a solution to road transport. It is the Kantanka Automobile Company.

For nearly four decades, one Ghanaian entrepreneur has been experimenting with the idea of producing cars locally. It started with the molding of simple farm implement and equipment. Ghanaians have been dazzled with Television images of the works of this man. He is Apostle Kwadwo Safo, founder of Kristo Asafo Church and mission. He established the Kantanka group of companies, which has in its stable transport company with buses that ply the cities of Ghana some ECOWAS countries, nails Production Company, a construction company, a quarry and a Cold Store. And the biggest and most promising of all is the Kantanka Automobile Company.

Of Apostle Kwadwo Safo

The dream- this ambitious dream, started right here in a makeshift workshop, somewhere in a village in Gomoa Mpota, in the Central region of Ghana. Young artisans and welders, male and female are cutting and molding metals. Led by religious leader, Apostle Kwadwo Safo, these young men and women are working hard to create what is expected to be a home-grown solution to Ghana's huge reliance on imported cars. Each of his handiworks attempt at local innovation- from TV sets that are switched on and off with voice commands- to electronic doors that open by a handclap. He's even attempted making a helicopter. The chopper stands in the Apostle's workshop here in Gomoa Mpota, and though it is yet to fly staff here are hopeful that work on it will be completed someday.

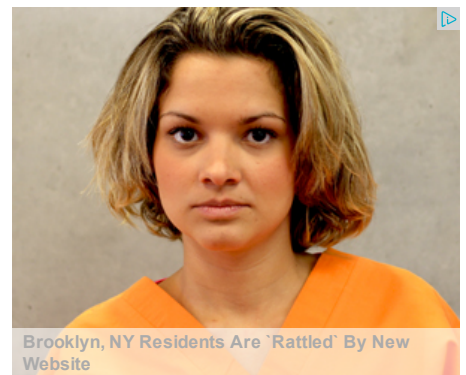
Son of Apostle Safo, Kwadwo Kantanka Jr is the CEO of Kantanka Automobile. He says the company aims to produce between 80 to 200 four wheel vehicles and pickups every month. To achieve this dream, the Kantanka Automobile Company has constructed a semi-automatic production plant at its site in GomoaMpota. Already, the company has created employment and apprenticeship for about 300

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youth. And when the new plant is in full operation, it will create over 500 jobs and help train about 500 apprentices annually, according to the company

THE KANTANKA SUV

What distinguishes the Kantanka from other popular existing brands is its logo, a silver star. This symbolises the belief of Apostle Kwadwo Safo that the African is a genius, who, given the motivation, can do great things too. The Kantanka interior décor also incorporates local colours and designs. All other things look more like any other car design on the market.

Some Ghanaians have doubts about the quality and safety of Kantanka vehicles. And as the company plans to go commercial, the biggest and most urgent challenge facing it now is authorisation from Ghana's regulators. This is Ghana's first major attempt at automobile manufacturing. This comes with challenges in regulation. The authorities are used to checking imported brand new and used vehicles whose safety ratings are known. They are now working out standards for local production of vehicles.

WAY FORWARD

Building a car is a tedious job. Car manufacturers all over the world enter into various partnerships for the supply of parts in building a single car. Japan's global car manufacturer, Toyota is reported to have about 200 suppliers from which the company gets various car parts. Same applies to many other global car makers.



Building a single car engine in the Kantanka old workshop takes weeks. And building the body of the car and other parts takes longer. With plans to start commercial production, it is obvious that Kantanka Automobile cannot do it all alone. It has therefore entered into a partnership with foreign firm for the supply of key components for its cars. CEO of the Company, KwadwoSafo Jr, again.

"We're in partnership with a foreign company. They have the international standards. We're buying a few components and parts from them," he told me.

My checks indicate that the foreign partner is a Chinese company. It will supply key components such as tyres, engines and lights. All the other major

manufacturing works will take place in Gomoa Mpota here in Ghana.

Apostle Kwadwo Safo believes in the words of Ghana's Founding Father and first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah that Blacks are capable of managing their own affairs.

In recent times Ghana's new Trade and Industry Minister, Dr. Ekow Spio-Garbrah has been championing the promotion of Made-in-Ghana products. He was at the Technology Exhibition to see for himself some of the works of the Apostle and his team. He tells me he's keeping a close eye on the works of the Apostle. He says his ministry will be one of the first to purchase a Kantanka vehicle, once they go commercial.

<http://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2014/December-28th/trade-ministry-to-be-first-customers-of-kantanka-vehicles.php>

For the full story on the Kantanka vehicles listen to Benjamin Tetteh Radio Documentary for Joy FM's Hotline here.

You can also find details of the story on this link .

You can contact the writer on Email: @benjieluv@gmail.com, (Twitter: [@benjieluv](https://twitter.com/benjieluv)), Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/benjieluv>

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